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STUDENT NURSES' PAGE

CHRISTMAS IN THE HOSPITAL

BY MURIEL M. WATSON

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CHRISTMAS time to the school-girl usually means a holiday vacation at home. To the students in a school for nurses it means something quite different; the Christmas season spent in the nurses' home. Upon first thought, one has in mind a boarding school Christmas, a few homesick girls too far from home to spend Christmas there, and a few others even less fortunate, homeless. But Christmas in a nurses' home is widely different from that picture.

Sickness being no respecter of persons and seasons, we have the sufferers from it with us at Christmas even as on non-festive days, consequently the hospital cannot close its doors and say to the pupil nurses, "Go home, enjoy Christmas with your own loved ones," but Christmas time in our Home and Hospital is made just as joyful, happy and homelike as possible.

From the first preparations this year, the very atmosphere was filled with the Christmas Spirit. As the month advanced, a joyful expectancy filled the thoughts of most of us, and though many a girl was wishing "That I might be home just for Christmas morning," nevertheless happy, smiling faces were not merely put on. In spite of a feeling of homesickness, which no girls away from home can escape, the fun of the plans for the holidays and the preparations which during the last few days included candy-making in the hospital kitchen and the decoration of

parlors, halls, library and dining hall, the general holiday spirit abroad,—every girl was happily contemplating a Christmas away from home, whether it were her first, second or third.

What student could feel blue when helping trim the home with evergreen and holly, and best of all decorating the tree itself? Though a girl be ever so homesick, she could not help in all these preparations without being insensibly drawn into the very heart and spirit of Christmas. Even though up to that time, one could not believe it was the Happy Season; when the tree was in place and one smelt its spicy, woodsy fragrance, one unconsciously began to hum Silent Night and lo! Christmas was in the heart!

On the afternoon before Christmas, all packages having been sorted and arranged for presentation; the tree trimmed and ready to light; time off duty, by turns, arranged for all nurses; Santa Claus waiting; the celebrations began with the lighting of the tree and the distribution of gifts. There were packages galore for all, faculty and pupils, both individually and collectively, the most blest by Santa Claus being the Freshmen,—which was as it should be on their first Christmas away from homes and families. A musical programme accompanied and followed the distribution of gifts. Members of the Hospital staff and of the Hospital Board of Directors called to wish their pupils a Merry Christmas. Then at

six, the carolers accompanied by a violinist, sang through the halls of the Hospital.

On Sunday morning, we were most fittingly awakened by the carolers in the chapel. At five-thirty they caroled under the principal's window to wish her a joyful Christmas, and at six o'clock they sang through the Hospital halls again to the joy and—surely we can say the blessing—of suffering brothers and sisters of the Christ Child there. Then came chapel, followed by a carol service in front of the Hospital in which service the whole training school took part.

If a nurse could not yet believe that it was Christmas and a happy season, when she joined in singing "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night," out in the clear frosty air of that morning, then at least she knew that it was His birthday and a joyous time.

Nurses off duty attended Christmas morning services. There were children's services in many of the churches that evening which many who were off duty in the afternoon attended.

Dinner on Christmas day was a bountiful and delicious meal. The dining hall had been decorated with holly; a tiny lighted Christmas tree graced each table, and though a nurse came from duty to dinner and was returning immediately after, she could and did feel that she was having a real Christmas

dinner and was one in spirit with those at home.

Classes were dismissed for the week following Christmas. The day itself having fallen on Sunday, holiday half-days were given on Monday. On Tuesday evening came the Training School party and each class contributed to the entertainment. Class parties occupied other evenings of the week, one class relieving another on duty, so that an entire class could be present at its own party. Eatables from home, games, music and happy good times permeated with a joyous feeling of comradeship, were in order at these gatherings. Christmas festivities, proper, ended on Sylvester Eve with a general merrymaking at midnight to welcome in the New Year. Many a girl learned in these days, if she knew it not before, that our Home could be and is more than merely a boarding school, that it is as nearly a home as any place save our own homes can be.

Through all these days of the Christmas season, a spirit of joy, contentment, comradeship, and love permeated all things. It seemed that we loved each other more, our School and our work, our own homes and dear ones,—in fact all mankind more than ever before. The Christmas spirit was over all and in all. We felt like saying with Tiny Tim, "God bless us every one!"

AN EFFICIENCY EXPEDIENT

The Rochester General Hospital, Rochester, N. Y., has a volunteer organization of aides who take to their destinations, flowers and packages brought in for the patients. Sometimes there are thirty articles to be delivered at one time. In order to do this work quietly and effectively, a child's express wagon, rubber tired, was secured, in which all packages are placed.